

Ethics of Duty and Crime Prevention: Practical Applications of Kantian Philosophy in Tanzania

Amos Julius Kasonyi¹, Dr. Thomas Marwa Monchena (PhD)²

^{1,2}Jordan University College a Constituent College of St. Augustine University of Tanzania, P.O.BOX 1878, Tanzania

Corresponding Author: Amos Julius Kasonyi

ABSTRACT: Since attaining independence in 1961, Tanzania has enjoyed relative peace and stability, with comparatively low crime rates within the East African region. However, from the early 1980s onward, the country witnessed a notable increase in criminal activities, including mugging, bag snatching, vehicle assaults, armed robbery, and burglary. This paper examines the practical relevance of Kantian moral philosophy—specifically the ethics of duty—in addressing crime prevention in Tanzania. Kantian ethics asserts that moral actions stem not from social conventions or personal desires, but from rational adherence to duty. Accordingly, crime prevention may be more effectively pursued when individuals act from a rational commitment to moral law, rather than from fear of punishment or pursuit of personal gain. The study employs a qualitative approach, drawing data from books, government documents, policy papers, development plans, legal statutes, internet sources, police records, and historical materials. Findings indicate a widespread lack of public ethical awareness concerning crime and its prevention. The paper concludes that incorporating Kantian ethics into national policies, civic education, and legal frameworks can serve as a morally grounded strategy for reducing crime and promoting social responsibility in Tanzania.

KEYWORDS: Ethics of Duty, Crimes, and Prevention

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This work aims to describe on Kantian moral philosophy as a guiding principle in the strategies and the whole process of crime prevention. In developing more knowledge, the paper highlight on the following subtopics: Background of the study, Statement of the problem, Objectives, Methodology, Literature review, Recommendations and Conclusion.

2.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Since independence in 1961, Tanzania has been characterised by high levels of peace and tranquillity, with relatively low crime rates compared to the situation in most neighbouring countries. However, in the early 1980s, the country experienced a rapid increase in crime and criminal activities, with mugging, bag snatching, attacks on vehicles, armed robbery, and burglary becoming major challenges. Reisman, L. al., (2013: 20). According to Feleshi (2019: 3), these changes occurred against the backdrop of a shift from a single political party advocating for an African Socialist centralised economy to a multiparty democracy with a free market system. For him, the sharp increase in crime and criminal activities is a product of this multiparty democracy and free market economy, which led to economic expansion and increased population movement. Furthermore, he considers technological advancement and the emergence of globalisation as key factors contributing to the problem. He recognises that these elements have posed serious challenges to the nation, as gangs became more interconnected both nationally and internationally, utilising physical means of transport and electronic devices such as the internet, cellular phones, and faxes.

In a public address to the President of the United Republic of Tanzania and Commander-in-Chief, Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan, in January 2024, the Chief of Defence Forces, General Jacob John Mkunda, highlighted the growing threat of terrorism and related security challenges facing the nation. He reported that terrorist networks have increasingly targeted Tanzanian youth between the ages of 15 and 35, recruiting and transporting them to join extremist groups operating in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, and Somalia. This alarming development underscores the emergence of a significant internal security crisis. In addition to the threat of terrorism, the country faces other pressing security concerns, including the rising prevalence of drug abuse, the misuse of social media platforms, and an increase in the number of illegal immigrants—all of which collectively pose serious risks to national stability (Mkunda, January 22: 2024).

In response to these multifaceted security challenges, the Tanzanian government has implemented various crime prevention strategies. Among these is the National Strategy on Urban Crime Prevention, which aims to mobilize communities to take part in

Ethics of Duty and Crime Prevention: Practical Applications of Kantian Philosophy in Tanzania

localized crime prevention efforts. This strategy has led to the development of citizen patrol groups such as *sungusungu*, the revitalization of the ward tribunal system, and the formation of Auxiliary Police units (Prime Minister's Office Regional Administration and Local Government, 2008: 2). Furthermore, the Tanzania Police Force established a National Task Force to counter the rise of conservative extremist ideologies, particularly those with religious underpinnings, which have contributed to a surge in attacks on police stations, religious institutions, and individuals (Tanzania Special Force Unity, 2016: 1). Complementing these efforts, the establishment of the National Security Council under the National Security Council Act (2010) seeks to formulate and uphold the core values of national security, with the aim of defending the nation's interests (National Security Council Act, 2010: 3-5).

Despite these significant interventions, the problem of crime and insecurity remains only partially addressed. In light of these persistent challenges, the moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant—particularly his ethics of duty—offers a compelling ethical framework. Kant's emphasis on rational moral duty, independent of external incentives or inclinations, may provide a deeper moral foundation for addressing crime and cultivating responsible citizenship within the Tanzanian context.

3.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Tanzania is currently facing a profound moral crisis that has contributed to a rapid rise in crime and criminal behavior. As a result, the issue of crime prevention has become increasingly complex and multifaceted. In attempting to address this challenge, two major schools of thought emerge: the criminological and the moralist perspectives.

Criminologists, such as Burke (2019: 5), argue that each state bears the responsibility of maintaining legal order while simultaneously improving the economic and social conditions of marginalized groups as a strategy for crime prevention. Similarly, Sutherland (2010: 3) asserts that the enforcement of legal statutes is essential in addressing societal deviance, suggesting that citizens must be subject to the rule of law. Thomas Hobbes, writing in *Leviathan* (1651: 162-179), further supports this position by asserting that individuals are bound to obey laws, not merely because they are members of a particular political community, but because they are part of a broader commonwealth. Collectively, these views suggest that crime prevention is best achieved through the imposition and enforcement of state laws.

In contrast, the moralist school of thought—rooted in classical philosophy—argues that crime prevention requires individual moral transformation. Classical philosophers maintain that the pursuit of a virtuous life entails the mastery of one's passions and desires, as well as acting thoughtfully and justly towards others. From this perspective, effective crime prevention demands not only legal enforcement but also internal moral discipline and ethical responsibility. Christian philosophers such as Thomas Aquinas and Augustine of Hippo further deepen this moralist view. They contend that the highest human good is found in a loving union with God, a goal toward which all human beings are naturally oriented, even if they do not always recognize it. From this theological standpoint, crime prevention is seen as a consequence of spiritual alignment and moral development rooted in divine love.

Despite the contributions of both schools, it is evident that many moral theories discussed in this context lack a precise, action-guiding framework suitable for contemporary crime prevention efforts. This gap, we argue, can be effectively addressed by the moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant—particularly his ethics of duty. Kant posits that moral duty is the necessity of acting out of reverence for the moral law. For an action to possess genuine moral worth, it must be performed not out of inclination or personal desire, but from a sense of duty alone. As Kant writes, "Duty is the necessity of acting from respect for the law... An action done from duty must wholly exclude the influence of inclination, and with it every object of the will, so that nothing remains to determine the will except objectively the law, and subjectively, pure respect for this practical law" (Kant, in Thomas, 2018: 13-14). Within this framework, crime prevention can be grounded in rational moral obligation rather than fear of punishment or external coercion. Thus, Kantian moral philosophy offers a robust foundation for ethical conduct and social order in Tanzania's contemporary struggle against crime.

4.0 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

4.1 General objective

The study aims at examining the relevance of Kantian moral philosophy in crime prevention in Tanzania.

4.2 Specific Objectives

- i. To describe Kantian moral philosophy
- ii. To describe crime prevention in Tanzania: strategies, approaches and measures
- iii. To examine factors that hinder crime prevention in Tanzania
- iv. To show how Kantian moral philosophy is a solution to the factors that hinder crime prevention.

5.0 METHODOLOGY

Methodology refers to the systematic and structured design of a research study, aimed at ensuring valid and reliable results that effectively address the stated aims and objectives. In this study, the researchers adopted the proceeding analytical method, a

Ethics of Duty and Crime Prevention: Practical Applications of Kantian Philosophy in Tanzania

philosophical approach that begins by deriving arguments from common rational knowledge toward the identification of its ultimate principle. From this foundation, the method proceeds synthetically by examining the principle and its sources, then returning to the common knowledge in which it is applied.

This analytical approach is particularly relevant to philosophical inquiry, as it enables the clarification of concepts through reason and logical consistency. It also safeguards against fallacies, moral relativism, and dogmatism by grounding moral principles in rational universality. Within this framework, the study engages with Immanuel Kant's ethical philosophy—especially his doctrine of the categorical imperative, which states: "Act always on such a maxim as thou canst at the same time will to be a universal law." (Kant, in Abbott, 2018: 4-49). This formulation emphasizes the role of rational duty and universality in moral decision-making. By critically examining Kant's ethics of duty, this method allows for a deeper understanding of how his moral theory can inform crime prevention strategies. Rather than focusing on empirical behaviors influenced by psychology, the study concentrates on the foundational principles of a possible pure will. Thus, the proceeding analytical method is deemed appropriate and effective for this research, as it offers a rigorous and philosophically grounded framework for exploring the role of moral duty in addressing crime within the Tanzanian context.

6.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

In addressing the issue of crime prevention in Tanzania, this study engages with several foundational works by Immanuel Kant that articulate his moral philosophy commonly referred to as the "ethics of duty." The primary texts examined include *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*, and *Critique of Practical Reason*. These works are pivotal in understanding how Kant's ethical framework can be applied to contemporary moral crises, such as crime and social disorder.

Central to Kantian ethics is the concept of duty (*"Pflicht,"* a technical term that demands careful philosophical interpretation. While the English equivalents "moral obligation" or "responsibility" are often used, they do not fully capture Kant's intended meaning. In contemporary usage, "responsibility" often implies being held accountable or having control over something. However, Kant's notion of duty is rooted not in social accountability or external expectations, but in rationality. According to Kant, moral actions have worth only when performed out of duty, not out of inclination or desire. Thus, our primary moral commitment should be to govern our lives through rational self-legislation. He maintains that "we act morally because it is our duty, and duty is good in itself" (Kant, in Wood, 2002: 92-95).

Moreover, Kantian duty involves a form of moral deliberation that is both free and ultimate. It is "free" in that it allows individuals to offer reasons for actions independent of subjective inclinations, and "ultimate" because it represents the final standard by which we judge how we ought to live. Unlike instrumental reasoning—which seeks the most efficient means to attain a given end—moral deliberation involves critical reflection on which ends are themselves worth pursuing. It transcends narrow self-interest, encompassing concern for the welfare of others grounded in their intrinsic worth as rational beings. This insight challenges the dogmatic view that practical reasoning is merely instrumental and desire-driven. Kant counters this by arguing that some desires arise from reasons, and not all desires are simply psychological urges. Rational desires—whether moral or non-moral—are shaped through reflection on principles that transcend self-interest.

Kant emphasizes that morality arises from our recognition of the objective worth of rational beings, who possess dignity and are to be treated as ends in themselves. Therefore, moral deliberation must consider the well-being of others not merely because we sympathize with them, but because their happiness matters in light of their inherent moral worth (Kant, in Wood, 2002, pp. 160–161). This conception forms a critical foundation for addressing crime, as it offers a universal and rational basis for valuing others and restraining harmful actions.

In *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant further asserts that duty is the necessity of acting from respect for the moral law. He argues that the moral worth of an action does not lie in the effects it produces, nor in any principle that derives its motivation from expected outcomes. Effects such as personal satisfaction or even the promotion of others' happiness do not constitute moral worth. Rather, the highest good—what Kant calls the supreme and unconditional good—resides in the very conception of the moral law itself, which only rational beings are capable of formulating. Therefore, an action has moral value only when the will is determined by the law itself, not by any anticipated consequences (Kant, in Abbott, 2018: 14).

6.1 Division of Duties

Allen W. Wood (2008: 162), in his work *Kantian Ethics*, observes that Immanuel Kant's fundamental division of duties is between *juridical duties* and *ethical duties*. This bifurcation underpins the structure of *The Metaphysics of Morals*, which is divided into the *Doctrine of Right (Recht)* and the *Doctrine of Virtue*, which Kant refers to as "ethics" (*Ethik*). These two domains represent distinct legislative frameworks, each grounded in its own foundational principle and expressing the inherent worth of humanity in different ways.

The domain of *Right* provides the foundation for the political state and its external legislation. It consists of juridical duties that form a rational legal structure, many of which are externally enforceable through civil or criminal law. However, Kant does not

Ethics of Duty and Crime Prevention: Practical Applications of Kantian Philosophy in Tanzania

classify all juridical duties as coercible; some, such as duties of justice grounded in equity, are seen as unenforceable. As Wood clarifies, a misunderstanding of Kantian "Right" arises when it is reduced to merely a philosophy of law or statecraft. Rather, it should be understood as a system of rational moral norms designed to ensure the treatment of humanity as an end in itself by safeguarding the external freedom of persons according to universal laws.

Conversely, the domain of *ethics* encompasses duties that require individuals to treat humanity—both in themselves and in others—as an end in itself in ways that transcend the mere protection of external freedom. These duties are fulfilled through rational self-constraint aimed at the cultivation of human nature and the promotion of human flourishing. Unlike juridical duties, ethical duties must never be externally or coercively imposed, as doing so would violate personal autonomy and infringe upon the rights of the individual. Instead, ethical duties must be motivated by inner moral feelings and rational commitment.

According to Kant, all juridical duties are also ethical duties in the broader sense, as respect for the law and for the external rights of others stems from the intrinsic value of humanity. Hence, juridical duties ought to be performed not merely out of legal obligation, but from a sense of duty grounded in moral respect. Within the domain of ethical duties, Kant further distinguishes between *duties to oneself* and *duties to others*. Each of these categories is divided into *perfect duties*, which are strictly obligatory and whose violation warrants moral blame, and *imperfect duties*, which, while not strictly required, are meritorious and worthy of moral praise.

6.2 Necessary Duties to Oneself

Kant asserts that the human being is not a mere thing to be used as a means but must always be treated as an end in itself. He illustrates this point through the example of suicide: if one considers ending one's life to escape suffering, one is effectively using oneself as a mere means to avoid pain, which contradicts the moral principle of treating humanity as an end. Therefore, one cannot ethically dispose of oneself by mutilation or self-destruction (Kant, in Abbott, 2018: 47).

6.3 Necessary Duties to Others

With respect to others, Kant explains that making a deceitful promise treats another person as a mere means to an end. The deceived individual cannot rationally consent to being manipulated in such a manner, and thus the moral agent fails to respect the other as an end in himself. Violating the rights of others in this way represents a failure to recognize their rational nature and intrinsic dignity (Kant, in Abbott, 2018: 42-43).

6.4 Meritorious Duties to Oneself

Kant also argues that it is not sufficient to merely avoid violating the principle of humanity as an end in itself; one must also act in ways that promote it. Human beings possess natural predispositions toward greater moral and intellectual development. Neglecting these predispositions may not constitute a direct violation of duty, but it fails to support the full realization of humanity's moral end (Kant, in Abbott, 2018: 48).

6.5 Meritorious Duties to Others

Kant holds that although humanity could, in principle, persist even if individuals made no effort to promote others' happiness, this would only reflect a negative alignment with the principle of humanity. A positive alignment, by contrast, requires that one actively seek to further the legitimate ends of others, insofar as possible. The principle that humanity must be treated as an end in itself is derived not from experience but from pure reason. It serves as an objective moral law that imposes limits on subjective ends and supports universal practical legislation (Kant, in Abbott, 2018: 43-49).

6.6 The Practical Necessity of Acting from Duty

Kant maintains that the necessity of acting from duty arises not from subjective feelings or inclinations, but from the rational relationship among moral agents. A rational will must be regarded as self-legislative—binding itself to universal laws out of respect for the moral law. The concept of *duty* involves not only objective conformity with the law (legality) but also subjective commitment to the law as a motive (morality). Only actions performed from duty, rather than in mere conformity with it, possess genuine moral worth (Kant, in Gregor, 2015: 17).

Actions performed with great sacrifice in the name of duty may be described as noble or sublime, but this designation is valid only when they stem from a genuine sense of moral obligation, not from emotion. Kant emphasizes that the dignity of duty is independent of personal gratification and insists that moral life must be governed by rational self-legislation. Any attempt to merge moral duty with the pursuit of personal satisfaction ultimately undermines moral life itself (Kant, in Gregor, 2015: 70-73).

6.7 The Will as Rational Capacity

Kant's doctrine of the will holds that rational beings possess the capacity to act according to principles derived from reason. The will is a faculty for self-determination through adherence to moral laws. An action's objective justification lies in its end, while its subjective motivation derives from the agent's commitment to act on rational principles. Hence, the will embodies both a rational evaluative capacity and a causal power that directs choices toward morally justified ends (Kant, in Gregor, 2015: xv-xvi).

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The United Republic of Tanzania has made commendable efforts in combating crime through various strategies and policy interventions aimed at promoting national security. Despite these initiatives, there is a widespread lack of public awareness regarding Kantian moral philosophy and moral philosophy more broadly. To address this gap, educational reforms should be implemented across all levels—from primary to tertiary institutions—to inculcate ethical principles that discourage immoral acts such as murder, sexual assault, and other crimes. Kant's ethics of duty offer a coherent moral framework that is especially pertinent for addressing such societal challenges.

8.0 CONCLUSION

In light of this analysis, it may be argued that the proliferation of crime in society is linked to a failure to act from duty, which, for Kant, is the sole criterion for moral worth. Crime prevention thus depends not merely on adherence to laws or social norms but on actions performed strictly from duty.

Political leaders, in particular, must recognize that their positions are not to be exploited for personal gain but are moral responsibilities that contribute to the common good. Their ethical integrity plays a crucial role in maintaining public trust and societal order.

Furthermore, intelligence officers and law enforcement agents, as rational beings, are guided by the moral law and ought to exercise their faculties in the collection, prevention, and detection of crime. Informers who assist in these processes must also act from duty, choosing what is good through the rational exercise of their will. Their actions should conform to maxims that could be universalized, aligning with Kant's categorical imperative. As Tanzania's founding father, Julius Nyerere, emphasized, every citizen has a role in safeguarding the nation. Informers and intelligence personnel alike must understand that law possesses moral force and carries with it an element of absolute necessity.

The will, as a rational faculty, should guide police officers away from personal interests and back to their primary duty of crime prevention. When agents obey this rational principle, they not only fulfill their professional obligations but contribute to the moral fabric of the nation. Moreover, moral discipline within the police and intelligence services is essential for addressing corruption and other crimes that threaten national stability.

The current moral state of the nation, marred by various social ills—including gender-based violence, drug trafficking, and misuse of digital platforms—can be effectively addressed through the Kantian doctrine of duty. Ultimately, the pursuit of noble and morally praiseworthy actions must be grounded not in emotional impulses, but in a rational respect for duty. Each citizen must internalize the principle that moral action arises from duty alone, affirming the dignity of rational beings and upholding the moral law as a universal legislative force.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Thomas Marwa, for his support, which has significantly contributed to the completion of this work. I also acknowledge my colleagues, particularly Mr. Joselini Heberti, for their contributions through sharing ideas that greatly influenced this paper.

REFERENCES

- 1) Feleshi, E. M. 2019. The Contribution of Criminal Intelligence in the War against crime in Tanzania Mainland. Dar Es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers Ltd.
- 2) Jeshi la Polisi Tanzania. 2016. Muundo na Majukumu ya Kikosi Maalum cha Kupambana na Ugaidi na Uhalifu Mkubwa Nchini (Tanzania Special Force Unity). Dar es Salaam: Makao Makuu ya Polisi.
- 3) Kant, I. 1774. Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals. Edited and Translated by Allen W. Wood. New York: Yale University Press.
- 4) -----, 1785. Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals. Translated by Thomas K. Abbott. GlobalGrey.
- 5) -----, 1788. Critique of Practical Reason. Edited and Translated by Mary Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 6) Prime Minister's Office Regional Administration and Local Government. 2008. National Strategy on Urban Crime Prevention in Tanzania. Dar es Salaam: United Republic of Tanzania.
- 7) Reisman, L. al. 2013. Tackling the Dangerous Drift, Assessment of Crime and Violence in Tanzania & Recommendations for Violence Prevention and Reduction. Dar es Salaam: Police Headquarters.
- 8) Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/OHGwC8szMBc?si=FqTSO0M7BWtKbM6X>
- 9) United Republic of Tanzania. 2010. The National Security Council Act 2010. Dar es Salaam: Government Printer.
- 10) Wood, A. W. 2008. Kantian Ethics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.